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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: FEDERATION COUNCIL CHAIR MIRONOV ON RUSSIAN  
ELECTIONS, BILATERAL TIES

Classified By: Ambassador John R. Beyrle; reasons 1.4(b,d).

11. (C) Summary: In an October 15 meeting with the Ambassador, Federation Council Chairman and Just Russia political party head Sergey Mironov offered frank analysis of recent national elections, as well as focused criticism of the ruling United Russia party. Just Russia is not considered to represent serious opposition to the Kremlin, and rarely deviates from official United Russia policy. Citing widespread fraud, however, Mironov rejected any pretense that the recent elections were free and fair, while simultaneously arguing that options to roll back the results were limited. He criticized United Russia as a party bent on power but with no real ideological foundation, likening their drive for control above all else to that of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Responsibility for the failed elections and the nature of United Russia, he argued, lay at the feet of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Mironov and the Ambassador also discussed U.S.-Russian relations, including Mironov's desire for greater interaction and cooperation between the Federation Council and the U.S. Senate. End Summary.

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Elections  
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12. (C) The Ambassador raised the walk-out from the State Duma by opposition parties October 14 in response to the failure by the Central Election Commission (CEC) to consider complaints about irregularities and fraud in the October 11 elections. Mironov began by noting that United Russia has a clear monopoly on distribution of all political information, especially to voters in the run-up to elections. He listed examples of election-day malfeasance, including registered voters being turned away from polls. While arguing that Just Russia had done well in Astrakhan, Moscow Oblast, Kursk, Yuzhno Sakhalinsk and Mari-El, he acknowledged that in elections for the Moscow City Duma Just Russia had likely not met the seven percent threshold for seats from their party list. A majority of the election commission, led by Chairman Churov, was simply signing off on results without investigating their legitimacy. He argued that the concerns of the Communist and Liberal Democratic Parties also had to be heard and acted upon. He lamented that President Medvedev declared he will not meet with the opposition to discuss the elections until their regularly scheduled meeting on 27 October. He predicted (presciently, as it turned out) that parties would return to the Duma soon.

13. (C) The Ambassador noted that government accountability before citizens is vital for the legitimacy of political leadership. Mironov went on to argue, however, that there was little action that could be taken at this point to alter the officially certified results. He rejected calls for a recount, as the ballot boxes had already been stuffed. Recounting the votes would only legitimize an inherently false number. He also discussed taking action in the courts,

but recognized that no elections would be annulled or re-run as a result of a legal decision. Indeed, CEC Chairman Churov has argued that those who dispute the now official results could be prosecuted under Russian law, and Putin dismissed them with a "losers are always unhappy" comment. Just Russia's recent participation in an opposition party walk out of the Federal Duma, he clarified, was not a protest against the results. The Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) and Communist Party (KPRF) left the Duma in protest of elections results. Just Russia left the chamber only when prevented from even discussing the election as a legislative body.

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United Russia vs Just Russia  
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14. (C) Mironov likened United Russia to the Communist Government of the Soviet Era. United Russia is positioning itself as a conservative party of stability, led enthusiastically by the persons whose personal interests it serves, but with no real ideological cohesion apart from a desire for power. While he has been impressed by the rhetoric of President Medvedev, Mironov is waiting to see actions replace words. United Russia has become a party serving only big business and bureaucrats - a return to the vested interests of the USSR. Mironov argued that continued United Russia leadership only prolonged state control over the economy and the status quo.

15. (C) Just Russia, on the other hand, offers a model of liberal democratic capitalism with strong social elements.

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Mironov, considered close to the Prime Minister, was nonetheless clear that final responsibility for flawed elections and the present state of the ruling party lay with its head: Vladimir Putin. Mironov did not go as far as suggesting any sanction of Putin. LDPR and KPRF have called for the resignation of Duma Speaker Gryzlov. Mironov said Just Russia can no longer cooperate with Duma Deputy Chairman Morozov, who was leading the chamber at the time of the walkout and actively prevented Just Russia members from discussing the election results on the Duma floor.

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"Reset" in Parliamentary Relations as well?  
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16. (C) The Ambassador briefed Mironov on Secretary Clinton's October 12-14 visit to Moscow, highlighting the priority both the U.S. and Russia place on concluding a START follow-up agreement by year's end, on addressing threats posed by Iran's nuclear program, on combating extremism and drug trafficking in Afghanistan and on increasing bilateral trade and investment. Mironov was grateful for the readout, raising the importance of expanding practical cooperation between NATO and the CSTO. Mironov agreed that concluding and ratifying a START follow-on agreement was critical for the world in the run-up to the 2010 NPT Review Conference, and that the U.S. and Russia had a special responsibility to set a solid example for the rest of the world.

17. (C) Mironov expressed some disappointment that his overtures to the U.S. Senate for closer cooperation had not yet been answered. Unencumbered by executive branch requirements, argued Mironov, legislators can often bring their experience to bear on current regional or world issues and propose ways forward that might have eluded others. The Ambassador concurred on the importance of parliamentary exchanges. He explained the busy legislative agenda in Washington this fall, and promised to convey Mironov's continued desire for closer ties to Washington.

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Comment

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18. (C) Just Russia is widely considered to be managed by the Kremlin, and leaders Putin and Mironov are considered close allies. It is very surprising that Mironov would choose to be so critical, but it is important to note that he did not go nearly as far as his colleagues from LDPR or KPRF. He has not called for a recount in elections and, though critical of Putin, suggested no action be taken against him. While leaders from LDPR and KPRF have called for the resignation of Speaker Gryzlov (who is closely connected to Putin), Mironov stated only that Just Russia would no longer cooperate with Morozov. Mironov may be walking a thin line between maintaining authority as head of an opposition political party and not straying too far from the Kremlin fold. Improving contacts between the Federation Council and the U.S. Senate would also be a constructive measure.  
Beyrle